

OBITUARY



DONALD PAUL FRECHIN (1918-1991)

Don Frechin, a Charter Member of the Lepidopterists' Society and well-known Washington state entomologist, passed away on 10 December 1991, at the age of 73. Don was born in Garden City, Kansas, on 6 January 1918; he moved with his parents to Bremerton, Washington, when he was 9 months old. He was an avid bug collector throughout his boyhood in western Washington. Following in his father's footsteps, he began working at the Navy shipyards in Bremerton in 1940. He married Gudrun (Gudy) Loyland in 1942 and raised seven children. In 1959, he took a job with the Boeing Company near Seattle, commuting by ferry for five years across Puget Sound. In 1964 the family moved to their north Seattle residence at 1745 Northeast 102nd Street, where Don lived out his life.

Don was an active collector throughout his life and exchanged specimens and information with many members of the Society. He was an ardent general collector, picking up examples of virtually all orders that could be pinned. Among the Lepidoptera, his passions included butterflies and larger moths, especially tiger moths and hepialids. Rearing insects was one of his favorite pastimes—he always had livestock around of sundry swallowtails, saturniids, and arctiids. For a time, he was involved with handpairing and hybridization of arctiids. Later in life he focused his attentions on tiger beetles, amassing a collection of nearly 8000 specimens.

Anyone who knew Don could not help but be impressed by his enthusiasm for, and knowledge of, Washington's insect fauna. As a graduate student studying the biosystematics of ghost moths, I sought out Don after seeing many of his hepialid specimens in major collections. Upon contacting Don, I found him to be the most knowledgeable Lepidopterist in North America on the habits of this seldom encountered family of Lepidoptera. I will never forget the time he (at the age of 64) took me to a trail at Steven's Pass in the northern Cascades, where he thought I might see *Gazoryctra roseicaput*. It was a cool, blustery September evening, clouds had engulfed the entire pass reducing visibility to little more than 30 feet. By dusk, when the moths were supposed to fly, the

temperature had dropped to 48°F (=9°C). I was sure no moths would be on the wing in such weather and suggested to Don that our time would be better spent at a lower, warmer elevation . . . perhaps in a restaurant with beverages on tap. He smiled and countered with a "wait and see" look. Sure enough, the moths appeared, when and where Don suggested—they disappeared almost as quickly, just thirty minutes later.

The size and nature of Don's collection was ever-changing as he often traded or sold parts of it. Eugene Munroe, acting on behalf of the Canadian National Collection (CNC), purchased most of Don's moths in the late 1950's, including Edward C. Johnston's important collection which Don recently had acquired. In the mid-1980's, I purchased Don's synoptic collection of Washington state Macrolepidoptera; this collection of 700 specimens is housed at the University of Connecticut. More than 39,000 specimens remain at his home in Seattle; the bulk of these are 22,000 Coleoptera and 14,500 Lepidoptera (mostly papered or unspread).

At least two species and one genus of insects were named after Don. Munroe described the pyralids *Pogonogenys frechini* and the genus *Frechinia*. Sanford Leffler described the tiger beetle, *Cicindela bellissima frechini*, endemic to the Olympic Peninsula, after him.

Don is survived by his wife, six children, and four grandchildren. Part of his legacy will be the countless collections he made of Washington state invertebrates, especially from the biologically unique areas that he so often visited, such as the Rocky Prairie near Tenino, the Olympic Peninsula, and the arctic-alpine areas of the northern Cascades. His absence from the Society will be keenly felt.

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